

3 Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology refers to any device used to improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability, allowing the individual to function more independently.

This equipment can enable individuals to carry out daily activities including eating, cooking, showering and maneuvering around the house.

Eligibility

Many individuals can benefit from assistive technology. Assessments of the needs and functioning capacities of people with multiple disabilities is vital to find the appropriate device(s) for them. Also, people with cognitive impairments may find assistive devices are difficult to understand and use correctly. Older adults with mild impairments may find that assistive technology devices supplement their informal care but do not prevent their need for personal assistance in some areas.

Advantages

Assistive technology presents many advantages for its users, including:

- Saving money by eliminating the need for personal assistants.
- Improving the quality of life by promoting autonomy and self-sufficiency.
- Helping people remain functionally independent for a longer period of time.

Special Concerns

Several factors should be addressed when promoting the use of assistive technology.


- Training is needed for the device to work effectively. Caregivers must be realistic about the patient's limitations and should have a positive attitude about the capabilities of the device.
- Assistive technology can involve ongoing technological support, including occasional maintenance.
- Choosing the appropriate equipment is fundamental to helping people accept and use the device. It is important that the device given to an individual is the right match.

Cost

Assistive devices range in price, and none of the major sources of health care funding for the elderly offer comprehensive coverage for assistive technology. The Medicare Part B program may pay for a portion of the cost of assistive technology as long as it meets their definition of “durable medical equipment.” This is defined as items that are ‘primarily and customarily used to serve a medical purpose, and generally are not useful to a person in the absence of illness or injury.’

The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) purchases many assistive devices for eligible individuals. The VA purchases hearing and visual aids, wheelchairs, van adaptive aids, patient lifts, hospital beds and other medical equipment. They have a very comprehensive system which offers extensive staff, education and training personnel, and invests in the research and development for assistive technology.

Subsidy programs are another alternative for financing assistive technology. These programs may provide equipment at a reduced cost or free of charge. The subsidy may be in the form of a grant, a rebate or a discount, and it may target specific products. These programs promote broader distribution of devices and encourage people who might not otherwise have considered it, to use assistive technology.

 **FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, PLEASE CONTACT THESE RESOURCES:**

**THE COUNTY OFFICE ON AGING/
STATE INFORMATION HOTLINE**
NJEASE: 1.877.222.3737

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & SENIOR SERVICES
DIVISION OF AGING &
COMMUNITY SERVICES**
P.O. Box 807
Trenton, NJ 08625-0807
1.800.792.8820 (toll-free for
NJ residents only)

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF
HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF DISABILITY SERVICES**
222 South Warren Street
P.O. Box 700
Trenton, NJ 08625-0700
1.888.285.3036 (toll-free)
609.292.7800
609.292.1210 (TDD)
[www.state.nj.us/human
services/dds](http://www.state.nj.us/human
services/dds)

For more information or additional copies please contact New Jersey EASE (Easy Access Single Entry), toll-free at 1.877.222.3737, the State’s Senior Services Helpline at 1.800.792.8820 (out of state callers: 1.877.222.3737), or visit the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services Website at www.state.nj.us/health/seniors.htm.

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